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2007-05817/

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007FOR0006-000096
Feb. 6, 2007

Ministry of Forests and Range

NUXALK NATION GAINS COMMUNITY FOREST AGREEMENT

VICTORIA – The Province has issued a community forest agreement to the Nuxalk Nation of Bella Coola, providing the First Nation with new economic opportunities and a greater role in stewardship of local forests, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"Our goal is to open up new forestry and land management opportunities that benefit the entire community," said Coleman. "This agreement will ensure the Nuxalk are directly involved in forestry on lands close to home, creating jobs and other economic activity."

The probationary community forest agreement is for an initial five-year term, and grants the Nuxalk Nation the right to harvest up to 20,000 cubic metres of timber per year on public forest lands. The community forest is comprised of nine tracts of land, along the North and South Bentick Arms, Bella Coola and Talchako Rivers in the Mid-Coast Timber Supply Area.

"This community has waited a long time for this day," said Chief Archie Pootlass. "Our hopes for this community forest are many, but our focus is on managing timber and non-timber resources for the long term in a way that respects cultural and spiritual values. We want to create a business that makes a positive difference to all of Nuxalk society."

The community forest is within the Central Coast Land and Resource Management Plan area, and forestry operations will generally follow the ecosystem-based principles agreed to during that planning process. Operations will also be guided by a Nuxalk Land Use Plan Strategy that is being developed.

Community forest agreements are a form of legal tenure by which the Province transfers decision-making to communities that wish to more fully participate in the stewardship of their local forest resources. After an initial term of five years, the agreements may be extended.

Since August 2004, government has provided new or expanded community forest opportunities for 33 communities across the province.

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